

## **Integrating Cultural Heritage and Values through Expressive Arts in the School Curriculum for Personality Development**

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**Abstract:** *This article is an attempt to heighten the awareness of the general readers, educators as well as professional practitioners to recognize the importance of cultural heritage and values and their contributions to personality development of young children. Children are not born with culture, but rather learn it through enculturation and socialization. Multicultural education is viewed as an intervention and an on-going assessment process to help institutions and individuals become more responsive to the human condition, individual cultural heritage, values and integrity, and cultural pluralism in society. It addresses the aesthetic development of young children, especially in the areas of creativity in music, creative movement, dance, creative dramatics, arts and literature which are proudly acclaimed as parts of our cultural heritage. It focuses to define what is meant by aesthetics and creativity. It further discusses the significant values of our cultural heritage in relation to aesthetic and creative development as well as personality development of the young ones.*

*“Art, when really understood, is the province of every human being. It is simply a question of doing anything well. It is not an outside, extra thing. When the artist is alive in any person, whatever his kind of mind may be, he becomes an inventive, searching, daring, self-expressive creature. He becomes interesting to other people. The world would stagnate without him.... and the world would be beautiful with him.....He does not have to be a painter or a sculptor to be an artist. He can work in any medium. He simply has to find the gain in the work itself, not outside it. Museums of art will not make a country an art country. But where there is the art spirit, there will be precious works to fill museum”.*

(Robert Henri)

## **INTRODUCTION**

We have seen that although early childhood education has made great strides in the past and is presently moving forward, even greater advances are necessary for the future. The challenge in this era of globalization is to address the social concerns and direct our efforts toward positive influences on young children. All children should be provided with high-quality childcare and education, regardless of their gender, race, religion, or economic situation. The school, which is one of the main ways in which education is disseminated, would have a specific role to play in the relationship between cultural heritage and values; for instance, it can promote through the school curriculum certain values, traditions and expectations, norms and customs of a particular society. In other words, education in its broader sense and schooling as a more specific form of education are both important conduits in the transmission of culture and values. Turning to teacher education, and its relationship to this all-embracing notion of culture and values, teachers and the education they receive are at the heart of the process of cultural awareness and transmission. Their influence is therefore pivotal, and so there is a need to enhance this influence further by investing in sound teacher education program which emphasizes not only academic and professional expertise but also aims to make teachers more culture sensitive and informed, in the part they play in cultural transmission. There is a necessity for increased support for the strengthening of family values, standards, traditions, experiences, and expectations across effective educational systems.

Culture features as a concept and a process that have a certain commonality with education. The process of acquisition, be it applied to language, cultural values, social attitudes or learning and teaching, makes up a substantial part of most educational processes, through formal schooling, informal or incidental encounters. The development of children's abilities and interests, as well as the search for personal identity and the realization of a person's self-esteem, may be considered as cardinal functions of education with special reference to moral or character education.

## **CHARACTER EDUCATION**

Moral or character education is the training of heart and mind toward good attitudes and values. In the wake of a deteriorating social fabrics in today's world, schools have sought to take rather comprehensive approaches to character education, with teachers expected to model, teach, and encourage moral values. Character involves possessing and demonstrating such quali-

ties as self-control, honesty, courage, equality, compassion, integrity, self-discipline, industriousness, responsibility, empathy, and patriotism (Berreth & Berman, 1997). Everyone recognizes that there is a core of values, often tied to our democratic beliefs, and that children do not innately possess these characteristics to enable them to develop these qualities. They need to have examples of right and wrong taught and modeled. Moral education is of paramount importance to our nation building which involves understanding and practising the do's and don'ts of relating to others. Within the Malaysian context there are several character traits such as: being responsible; providing moral and emotional support; showing respect for others; having faith in God; living up to potential; earning an honest living; following a moral code; having a happy marriage; earning a good living; helping the community; and being "free". Since the family is the first unit of society to which the child is introduced, it has paramount responsibility for encouraging character education as significant aspect on the educational curriculum.

There are six facets of character education, namely, being unconditionally friendly most of the time; being free from inner anger; committing to worthwhile causes and events vigorously and confidently; being self-controlled; complying with rules and regulations; and understanding the consequences behavior. Thus, the foci of character education curriculum are 1) respecting the environment, 2) integrating moral principles, 3) dealing with social issues, 4) dealing with emotions, 5) understanding and celebrating differences in others, and 6) understanding and celebrating differences in oneself. (Koehler & Royer, 2001).

Our school system does serve as a resource for developing and fostering positive character traits in children. It is the hope of our nation to have an effective character education curriculum that assures our schools to be more caring, reduces negative student behavior, improves academic performance, and prepares youth to be productive and responsible citizens. These educational goals are also appropriate for the earlier childhood years. The most outstanding character skills that are prerequisites for personality development are empathy and self-discipline. Empathy allows children to understand the perspective of others, and self-discipline is the ability to take action or defer gratification in order to commit to a set of values or goals. Along with teaching democratic and civil values, our children need to be taught to think for themselves and to make responsible decisions. As these children develop positive character traits and internalize them as worthwhile values, their ability to function and behave appropriately as responsible, valuable citizens rapidly inculcated for life

## **EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION**

In addition, our concern is also for the quality of kindergarten and primary education, which too often has an academic focus, with the main activities each day being completion of worksheets or homework. Early childhood education should be different from other kinds of education. It should be full of exhilarating fun and enjoyment. The elements of 'play', 'fun', and 'enjoyment' in the education of the young children have been seen to be of paramount value and importance in all areas of their development. Play and fantasy are central features of what it means to be human. Mind, body, and spirit are involved when one participates fully in the performing arts of music, creative dramatics, movement /dance, arts and literature. The essence of movement and expressive arts in the education of the young is the idea of creativity and its liberating effects on the children. They are given the freedom of expression and encouraged to produce imaginative, creative and inventive thinking and movement solutions using props, stimuli, symbols, characters, and forms such as rhythms, colors, lines and words that are available in music, arts, drama and movement through exploration, discovery, problem solving, idealization, imagination, and improvisation to constitute creative expressions to interpret meanings. Inhibition of movement and creative play limits kinesthetic awareness and aesthetic perceptions which are essential to psychological development. What we want to achieve in the education of our young ones, however, is a harmony of mind, body and spirit so that the intellectual, emotional, social and physical will work together toward a healthy balanced individual. Such experiences, at any age, make a vital contribution to the total growth of the young child. To cater toward this form of appropriate curriculum design we need to determine how best to provide experiences that contribute to the development of the whole child, and those experiences should be available for all children to help them reach their full potential and serve as caring community of good citizens to the entire generation.

Early childhood teachers should also be highly trained and reflect thoughtfulness, enthusiasm, creativity, empathy, hope, tolerance, understanding, warmth, and nurturance in line with this curriculum. They should be oriented toward a refined awareness, understanding, appreciation and sustaining our cultural heritage through preservation and enhancement of our arts and crafts such as traditional and ethnic music, dance and movement, sports and games, local legends and literature, national traditions and customs, artifacts, costumes, festivals, ceremonies and carnivals. While an individual acts to satisfy certain internal needs and wants, the way in which these wants are satisfied is heavily influenced by forces external to the

individual. As individuals, we are part of larger social groups by which we are influenced. These groups themselves are part of and influenced by the surrounding culture.

The concept of organizational culture has become a significant force in educational thought. As indicated by Pai and Adler (1997):

***There is no escaping the fact that education is a socio-cultural process. Hence a critical examination of the role of culture in human life is indispensable to the understanding and control of the educative processes. A person has personality, a group is to have an identity that reflects its traditions, beliefs, values, and visions.***

Culture can be defined as a set of beliefs, values, attitudes, habits and forms of behavior that are shared by a society and are transmitted from generation to generation. A knowledge of the culture of a nation or subunit within that particular country is important to an understanding of how individuals within that country or subunit will behave. The social role that an individual takes is learned through socialization - *the process of social learning by which cultural role expectations are handed down from one generation to another*. All over the world, including Malaysia, traditional arts and crafts as well as performing arts are dying out, as generations of people with particular skills are replaced by generations who do not learn these skills because they are thought to have become irrelevant to their modern way of life. Therefore, it is very important to inculcate social skills into the early childhood education through a refined understanding and appreciation of our cultural heritage since they are full of authentic values which give a picturesque identity to our nation.

Culture is the fundamental building block of identity. Through cultural learning, children gain a feeling of belonging, a sense of personal history, and security in knowing who they are and where they come from. Our individual cultures are shaped by such things as family structures, customs, and rules; educational backgrounds; interpersonal relationships; travel experiences; and religious beliefs (Coleman, 1997). Culture also includes all the subtle aspects of both verbal and nonverbal communication that people use all the time. Everyone has a language and culture, which are the very essence of who and what people are. All people have an ethnic heritage. A person's ethnicity is his or her connection to the past, and it is one of the keys to the individual sense of self. As young children begin maturing and acquiring a positive self-concept, they also begin relating to and accepting others. These early years are the time to start influencing children's basic

cultural attitudes, values, and beliefs. Cultural stereotypes arise from incomplete and often distorted conceptions of people and events. We must be continually reminded of the urgency and need for attention to our cultural knowledge, attitudes, and skills.

## **MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION**

*Multicultural education* is a vision of schooling based on the democratic ideals of justice and equality. In a description of its historical development, any leading proponents of multicultural education reported that “ a major goal of multicultural education, is to reform the school and other educational institutions so that students from diverse racial, ethnic, and social class groups will experience educational equality” ( Banks, 1993.). The design of education in Malaysia is of multicultural in nature. Hence multicultural education in Malaysia is viewed as preparation for the social, political, and economic realities that individuals experience in culturally diverse and complex human encounters. These realities have both national and international dimensions. The programs provide a process by which an individual develops competencies for perceiving, believing, evaluating, and behaving in differential cultural settings in assurance of harmony in living. Thus, the paramount emphasis of multicultural education in Malaysia is envisaged as an intervention and an on-going assessment process to help institutions and individuals become more responsive to the human condition, individual integrity, and cultural pluralism in society. The Malaysian Educational System is concerned with the multidisciplinary curriculum which could be emphasized to (1) promote analytical and evaluative abilities to confront issues such as participatory democracy, racism and sexism, and the parity of power; (2) develop skills for values clarification including the study of the manifest and latent transmission of values; (3) examine the dynamics of diverse cultures and the implications for developing teaching strategies; and (4) examine linguistic variations and diverse learning styles as a basis for the development of appropriate teaching strategies. Spring (1998) suggests four goals of multicultural education:

- (1) Work to build tolerance of other cultures
- (2) Abolish racism
- (3) Teach substance from various cultures, and
- (4) Teach and help students view the world from different cultural perspectives.

A multicultural approach to learning is a way of looking at the world that challenges our often narrow and distorting views of culture and seeks more thoughtful and inclusive teaching. When young children develop a spirit and attitude of tolerance, an understanding of various cultures, as well as an ability to understand a different frame of reference, this increases their sensitivity and knowledge and promotes actively working for social justice as they mature. Multicultural education is a movement designed to empower all children to become knowledgeable, caring, and active citizens in a deeply troubled and ethnically polarized nation and world.

### **Social Skills**

Developing social skills is not an easy task. It takes knowledge of correct relationship skills, in addition to time, experience, and practice. We must be patient as we provide assistance and guidance to children who struggle to develop positive social and emotional skills. These skills can be taught and learned but most importantly 'caught,' as the teacher provides the model. A teacher's own attitude toward the self, children, and adults is one of the most powerful forces in this process. If the teacher likes and enjoys others, particularly children, the message that people are to be liked, respected, and esteemed is received. Teachers should work to overcome ethnocentrism, the attitude that one's own culture is correct, right, or natural. Accepting and respecting diversity should be a way of life, a value that is lived, felt, and woven into all areas of the classroom and curriculum. This means helping children value others and express positive feelings and behaviors toward them. It is an active approach to countering attitudes and behaviors that sustain prejudice, ethnocentrism, racism, stereotyping, sexism, discrimination, and oppression. There are two general goals of early childhood education where professionals should consider when addressing issues of teaching diversity:

- (1) The profession has an ethical responsibility to understand the role of culture and ethnicity in child development.
- (2) Professionals must develop effective skills to meet the cultural and linguistic needs of families from all cultures. (Sturm, 1997).

In order to guide children to function cooperatively in this diverse society, we must teach them attitudes, concepts, and skills that will enable them to function effectively in the society. We have to provide them with basic programs, practices and a supportive environment for learning relat-



ing to the pluralism of our society. Some of these concepts are inculcated in multicultural education, multiethnic education, ethnic studies, and global education. Teaching diversity enriches the children by providing various ways to solve problems and to view people, events, and situations. For instance, a puppet story with a focus on celebrating differences in children helps children recognize the value of diversity. Or playing blocks allow both boys and girls to create their own play environment into a house, farm, school, fire station, car, doctor's office, or other object. Both boys and girls, cooperatively playing together in the housekeeping area, should experience the freedom of exploring in a nonbiased atmosphere.

In a country like Malaysia that champions equal rights and the opportunity for an individual to improve his or her conditions, educators and parents should be concerned with helping young children achieve academically, socially, and politically. It is impossible to teach children in the classroom equally because they are not the same. They have different needs, skills, and experiences that must be recognized in developing educational programs. Each child is different because of physical and mental abilities, gender, ethnic origin, race, religion, language, and age. They behave differently in school and toward authority because of cultural factors and their relationship to the dominant society. As educators and parents, we behave in certain ways toward them because of our own cultural experiences within the power structure of the country.

## **EXPRESSIVE ARTS**

The most important goal for early childhood professionals is to provide every child with a responsive learning environment. Creating a classroom, curriculum, and atmosphere that focus on diversity is challenging. This could be easily achieved through the expressive arts such as creative dramatics, our local arts, traditional music and dance, as well as from other cultures that can be included as a natural part of the early childhood environment. Music is the universal language, and it is part of every culture's identity. Music expresses culture and history. Recorded history is replete with songs and music that tell stories of heroes, passions, and wars. For example, in our country, it is impossible to think of our successful independence without recalling the songs of marches and patriotic songs and relics that give picturesque memories of triumphs.

### **Music**

Music also reveals cultural values, is used to celebrate triumphs, helps in the grieving process, express fears, gives hope, sustain traditions, and is



integral to religion. Through music children experience pleasure, joy, and creative expression. Music is one of the acceptable avenues for release and expression of feeling, moods, and emotions. Music allows for the development, as well as, for dissolving undesirable feelings and moods. It is cathartic. It can quiet or calm children, create listening moods, or soothe hurt and troubled feelings. Music has therapeutic value as well. Hence, music can enhance the child's feelings of self-worth. Through music and song, children should be permitted to 'put themselves into' to interpret them in their own style and to make up new words, new melodies, and new movements. Music and song can also foster appreciation of various cultures, as well as one's own heritage. As music and song express culture and history, so can they develop pride and identity. As children enjoy learning music, songs and dances from various cultures and nations they are starting to be in tune with globalization. To young children, music and movement are often one and the same. Movement gives children another way to explore music. When children hear music, they move spontaneously. Movement and dance are children's play and they naturally respond to music by moving. Why should a classroom teacher use music and movement to teach curricular content and skills? In order to have a logical explanation to this question, recognition of some values of movement and expressive arts is pertinent. Salmah Ayob (1992) states that values of movement and expressive arts are considered to be the followings:

- Enjoyment of movement and expressive arts for their own sake
- An acceptable way of reducing tension and stress
- Means of self-expression and communication
- Aesthetic awareness and appreciation
- Appreciation of cultural heritage and values
- Increased kinesthetic perception and concept development
- Physical fitness and acquisition of motor skills
- Social involvement
- Creativity and problem solving
- Imaginative thinking and divergent responding
- Critical judgment and decision making.

In view of the offered values, a classroom teacher should integrate music and creative movement to teach curricular content and skills base on the following criteria (Salmah Ayob, 1994):

- Music and creative movement can increase sensitivity, respect and cooperation
- Music and creative movement give fun and enjoyment
- Music and creative movement improve concentration, responsibility, and self-discipline
- Music and creative movement are part of real life, so they should be part of school life
- Music and creative movement develop self-expression, self-concept, confidence, and leadership
- Music and creative movement unite the physical, mental and spiritual
- Music and creative movement help us be healthy
- Music and creative movement give opportunities for experimentation, creative problem solving, and imagination
- Music and creative movement provide opportunities to learn through use of images - visual connections, sound associations, etc., and the use of basic elements such as body, energy, space and time
- Music and creative movement are alternative forms of communication
- Music and creative movement satisfy our need for aesthetic and kinesthetic beauty
- Music and creative movement are important means of understanding, expressing and appreciating culture and its heritage.

### **Creative Dramatics**

Dramatic play, theater and drama, on the other hand, have a long history of being related to human behavior and education. Aristotle thought theater provided audiences with a cathartic effect to release emotions, medieval priests used theater as an educational vehicle to explain Christianity to the masses, and primitive societies used pantomime and dance in rituals to cast out demons. Creative dramatic play offers ready opportunities to share clothing and items that reflect such diversities as the different physical abilities, genders, and ages of people. For example dolls in the classroom should reflect different ethnic identities, physical abilities, and genders. 'Persona' dolls can be used to introduce differences, particularly some of the differences not found among children in the classroom. Here is a brief look at ideas from drama proponents who have had an impact on the field:

Winifred Ward stated her goals are individual and social development. She used movement, pantomime, characterization activities, dialogue, and story dramas, moving from simple to complex. She believed performance was a vital aspect of drama and teachers should guide students in their efforts to achieve their goals.

Brian Way's focus is on the process, not product nor performance. He used personal experiences to lead students to self-discovery. He encouraged teachers to introduce drama into the classroom, even for five minutes each day. His approach opposes teacher demonstration because he believes acting skills are unnecessary for participation in drama. Life events are used as the drama stimulus, with few student performances and little focus on evaluation.

Dorothy Heathcote emphasizes using life experiences to reflect, analyze, and test out conclusions. Heathcote sees four phases of dramatic activity:

- Making plays for audiences
- Knowing the craft, history, and place of theater in our lives
- Learning through making plays, and
- Using "as if it were" drama to motivate study.

Geraldine Siks' focus is on students' creative and expressive skills. She places drama in the categories of art and language art. Students learn to be audience members, players, and playmakers.

Dramatic play is the most highly developed form of symbolic play, in which the child begins the incredible process of using objects as symbols for objects and events in the real world. Dramatic play is one of the greatest joys of childhood, helping children to develop interpersonal skills of conflict resolution and cooperation, and improve their problem solving and language abilities. There are many types of dramatic play activities, and each offers opportunities for all children to talk and listen, thus developing the language arts. Children can easily adopt animal and cartoon characters and characterize their heroes and heroines from myths and legends. They promote socialization and release of feelings and attitudes. The importance of dramatic play in the early years should not be neglected. Dramatic play enhances creativity and offers the opportunity for children to play out their own personal culture and world. Kostelnik (1993) proclaimed that children learn through play as indicated in the figure below:

Figure 1

*Children Learn through Play*

Play is fun	It is pleasurable.
Symbolic	It is not constrained by reality.
Meaningful	It connects and relates experiences to one another.
Active	Children are doing things.
Voluntary	No one has to force children to play.
Intrinsically motivated	Curiosity, the desire for mastery or affiliation.
Rules governed	Rules - implicit or explicit.
Episodic	Play involves shifting goals that children develop spontaneously.

Creative dramatics is more sophisticated than free dramatic play. Creative dramatics is an improvisational, non-exhibitional, process-oriented form of drama in which participants are guided by a leader to imagine, enact and reflect on nursery rhymes, folktales, and other stories. Creative dramatic values have been defined and interpreted as such:

- Values and respects children's individuality and creative expressiveness
- Offers a means for cooperative learning and teamwork through shared experiences
- Enables children to construct meanings from abstract situations and personalize real-life situations
- Provides opportunities to be spectators and actors.

These values can be defended for their cognitive, emotional, and social benefits. They encourage creative thinking and doing and can be integrated into all aspects of the curriculum, but are particularly relevant and so easily stimulated during free play or dramatic play.

Why should teachers integrate creative dramatic? Teachers who have incorporated drama into the life of school learning claim increased enjoyment and substantial effects on skill and content achievement in science, social studies, math, and language arts. As stated by Cornett (1999), creative dramatics proclaim to have the following criteria:

- Drama is part of real life and prepares children to deal with life's problems
- Drama engages children in creative problem- solving and decision-making
- Drama develops verbal and nonverbal communication
- Drama can enhance children psychological well - being
- Drama develops empathy and new perspectives
- Drama builds cooperation and develops other social skills
- Drama increases concentration and comprehension through engagement
- Drama helps students consider moral issues and develop values
- Drama is an alternative way to assess by observing, i.e. externalization
- Drama is entertaining
- Drama contributes to aesthetic development
- Drama offers a learning avenue that enhances other areas of the curriculum.

### **Children's Literature**

Another powerful and controversial aspect of expressive arts is their role as a vehicle for truth where authors/artists share their truths through the creative art forms of stories and poems. These features are found in literature. Literature is part of our cultural heritage. History has long been passed on through stories. Through literature, children learn the world's collection of folk tales, myths and legends which stimulate moral thinking about values and issues of right and wrong. The key is that teachers must model literature as a way of learning about life, participate as learners rather than experts, and offer students choices in how they respond to literature. While the teaching of values is a sensitive area, no one denies that children must learn right from wrong and come to understand and behave using common standards for honesty, justice, responsibility, initiative, and so forth. It is absurd to imagine lessons can be value free and, in the arts, this is nearly impossible since the content of the arts is expressing and understanding opinions and perspectives. So many values emerge from children's literature and creative expressive arts activities. A great deal of freedom lies within the limits, rules, and responsibilities. Individualism flourishes, self-expression flows, and there is satisfaction and fun in both the process and the product. Expressive arts activities also have sensory qualities, often involving several of the aesthetic and kinesthetic senses at one time.

## **AESTHETIC AND CREATIVITY**

Aesthetic is a branch of philosophy concerned with an individual's pursuit of and response to beauty. Aesthetic is the awareness and appreciation of pleasant sensory experiences. Aesthetic awareness involves the ability to discern and be sensitive to things in the environment and to human creations. Aesthetic development deals with the child's capacity to perceive, be sensitive to, and respond to human creations and beauty in the natural environment. It encompasses the young child's individual taste, love of beauty, and criteria for judging beauty.

Aesthetic involves **attitude, process and response**. The aesthetic attitude involves:

- Openness or childlike freshness
- Spontaneity
- Intense focusing on the here and now
- A sense of joy, wonder, marvel, or excitement
- Willingness to perceive as if experiencing something for the very first time
- Commitment or willingness to "stop and smell the roses".

The aesthetic process involves active engagement rather than passive taking in. It means using all the senses to ravish an object or experience, getting completely lost or totally consumed. For example:

- Listening attentive to music rather than merely hearing a song
- Visually exploring or quietly contemplating a work of art rather than merely glancing at it
- Manipulating and feeling a peacock's feather rather than quickly touching it.

In essence, it is the integration and organization of thoughts, feelings, and perceptions involving heightened awareness and increased intensity of feelings. This process of integration may occur internally as insights or may be expressed outwardly in a variety of personally meaningful ways. For example, dance not only satisfies and deepens the aesthetic sense by its own forms, but also gives insight into the fundamental elements common to all the arts. It carries the individual child beyond the limits of one art into the wider realm of all the arts and makes him a citizen of its world of beauty and meaning. This is one of the greatest values of any art – the power to carry the individual beyond himself into a broader world of imaginative experience and understanding. But even more important for this broader

orientation than the knowledge of beauty is the attitude which creative movement or dance helps to cultivate, for the accessibility to any art experience depends upon the aesthetic attitude with which it is approached. The source of all the arts is the relationship with the individual personality. For instance, when the dancer creates, is forced to face the content of his own personality and makes selections from it. He experiences an exhilarating awakening and refining of the excellence of his nature which may ultimately affect everyday living. He seeks to identify himself with the ideal meaning of his experiences, and in his attempt to do so he is led to the exercise of critical judgment and discrimination. In his effort to choreograph his works of art, he develops an appreciation of the compositions of greater artists, and also experiences the joy of achieving something of his own. In the effort to attain unity in expression, the emotional nature is brought under control and given the strength of achievement and restraint. The personality is active in its entirety, unified and expanded in experiencing a perfect form of expression. Thus, creative movement or dance is born of the personality and gives back to the personality. It brings form, integration, and enrichment to an individual life and to society.

Aesthetic processing takes time and a commitment to flow with the experience. The aesthetic attitude and process result in a response or reaction on many different levels. Our affective response may involve a sense of wonder, appreciation, surprise, a feeling of being moved or touched, awe, exhilaration, or being carried away. At the physiological level our response may result in a smile, grin, laugh, perspiration, shiver, chill, heavy sigh, or even "goose bumps". Our reaction will also entail a mental response in the form of a decision, judgment, or evaluation. Through expressive arts an individual child is exposed to a wealth of sensory experiences and variety in each of the arts. Expressive arts encourage a child to critique, develop personal preferences, and value visual arts, music, movement, dance, drama and literature.

Some examples of aesthetic experiences include:

- Seeing and touching the delicate petals of a flower
- Listening to and moving to the beat of an ethnic song
- Stopping to savor the aroma of freshly baked bread and coffee beans
- Sitting in wet sand and splashing in the waves upon the shore
- Slowly sipping hot chocolate while marveling at all the different colors crackling in a campfire
- Admiring the linear design and pattern in a skyscraper
- Admiring the colors of the sunset or dawn.



It is believed that children who grow up with the aesthetic sense will become wise consumers and concerned citizens who will advocate for beauty in the community and workplace. They will develop into adults who know and value good design and can use this as wise consumers in choosing vehicles, clothing, home furnishings, and entertainment as well as on a wider level in planning cities, attempting to solve problems of pollution, war, poverty, and urban blight. On the other hand, they are claimed to be more human. Our humanistic concern for the whole child motivates us to provide for all aspects of child development. That development could be achieved through expressive arts (Salmah Ayob, 1996). It is our belief that children who marvel at beauty of letters, words, numbers, stories, poems, formulae, books, symbols, and people of other culture and heritage are more humane. Hence, it is important for children to value the arts and directly participate in a variety of the arts.

The counterpart of aesthetic is creativity. There are also numerous definitions and approaches to describing creativity, but whether it is being defined in terms of art, thinking, writing, or any other activity, certain words and ideas come to mind. The most common definition of creativity focuses upon the product and the process. Creative ideas (the products) are seen as new combinations of previously unrelated ideas, or looking at it another way, and new relationships among ideas. The creative process is the process of combining those ideas or perceiving those relationships. Defining creative ideas as new combinations of existing ideas has strong intuitive appeal.

Creativity appears to involve intuition, elaboration, fluency, flexibility, originality, evaluation, and divergent thinking. All children possess creativity. When they express thoughts, feelings or actions in original, self-initiated, or inventive ways, they are being creative. Children who are the most creative will often manifest a determination to express their creativity. Torrence (1977) identified 7 indicators of creativity that may be useful in identifying and explaining the behavior of the highly creative young children.

They are:

- Curiosity
- Flexibility
- Sensitivity to problems
- Redefinition
- Self-feeling – a feeling self importance and individuality
- Originality
- Insight

Highly creative children often manifest characteristics such as the following:

- Have the ability to perceive unusual and broad relationships
- Have a different time or space perspective
- Have a sense of humor
- Enjoy inquiring and asking questions, as well as problem solving
- Show great ingenuity and imagination
- Offer many ideas and a variety of valid alternatives in problem solving
- Enjoy taking risks and participating in adventure
- Are often persistent in reaching a goal
- Enjoy first-hand investigative activities that provide the opportunity to probe, explore, discover, and create
- Use elaborate language and often express themselves in unique ways.

The ability to create new ideas and solve problems is one of the most important competencies for children to develop. Experiences and activities in the expressive arts reduce stress, enhance development, facilitate learning, and balance the often exhilarating lives of children. Specific conditions that facilitate the development of creativity through expressive arts include the following:

- Giving responsibility, accountability and independence
- Valuing the expression of feelings and individual divergence
- Emphasizing self-initiated exploring, observing, and questioning
- Creating a feeling of freedom and openness, and encouraging spontaneous expression
- Developing an accepting and harmonious atmosphere
- Providing a wealth of stimulation from a rich and varied environment
- Asking provocative and thoughtful questions
- Valuing originality
- Providing many opportunities for achievement
- Providing differentiated and meaningful interaction.

There are two aspects of expressive arts to education: one is the capacity to take in, to become impressed; the other is the capacity to give out and to express. To receive impressions informs the mind, but to express its reactions to these impressions requires coordination and cooperation of

all the mental powers. If expressive arts with special reference to dance or movement education is to contribute to this psychic integration, it is essential that an individual experiences movement in forms characteristic of human responses. In other words, expressive arts must be emotional, intellectual, and spiritual, as well as physical, if it is to contribute to the larger aims of education – developing of personality through conscious experiencing. In such a concept of human development the body should be considered as the outer aspect of personality, for it is the agent through which we receive impressions from the external world and by which we communicate our meaning. The most completely developed person is the one who has trained all his powers with equal dignity and consideration, in order that he may be physically, intellectually, and emotionally integrated. It is acclaimed that the meaning of education is the disciplining and training of these powers and the attainment of skills in execution.

Creativity is seen as a set of personality traits as follows:

- An openness to the new and unexpected
- A tolerance for ambiguity
- A willingness to experiment and take risk
- Impulsiveness
- Curiosity
- A preference for complexity
- Being highly intuitive
- Sensitivity
- Flexibility
- Introversion
- Individualism
- Nonconformity – daring to be different
- Independence
- Playfulness
- A sense of humor
- Prefers being alone – may be asocial.

In expressive arts, as in reality, the drives are of the emotional nature. When subjected to the restraint and directions of the intellect and executed by the physical, they result in a fusion of all our energies with the focal point centered in the personality. The place of expressive arts in developing such individual growth is understood if personality is defined as the expressive total of our physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual

energies. These energies are in a constant state of reacting to and being acted upon by the social order in which we live in. Of all the arts, dance or creative movement is peculiarly suited to such a fulfillment of the personality. It serves all the ends of individual growth; it helps to develop the body; it stimulates the imagination and challenges the intellect; it helps to cultivate an appreciation for beauty; and it deepens and refines the emotional nature.

## **PERSONALITY AND EXPRESSIVE ARTS**

As creativity is fostered through the expressive arts (music, visual arts, creative movement/dance, creative dramatics, and literature) during the early childhood, children's abilities to dream and kindle new ideas, accept challenging tasks, and discover new horizons for their cognitive, emotional, spiritual and social benefits are easily stimulated and enhanced (Salmah Ayob, 1994, 1996). As a part of the entity of the individual child, the area of social attitudes and feelings plays an essential role in education. It is becoming increasingly important to acknowledge the values and functions of the creativity and aesthetics developments in our society. Our social / cultural heritage is preserved and embellished through the arts. They transmit our cultural beliefs, traditions, behaviors, religions, or values and language. Arts define individual and group identities and reveal cultural similarities and differences. Arts at home and at work enhance our environments, relax our mind and bodies, express our emotions, and gratify our aesthetic and creative natures. In rituals and celebrations, the arts maintain our religious beliefs; they signify rites of passage throughout the life span and celebrate holy days and special events. The arts exert powerful political force and area often used as catalysts for social change and to promote social and political ideologies. Predominantly, arts are seen as the motivating elements that influence the development of personality traits of an individual or a society.

The emphasis in expressive arts, however, has historically been on the organic aspects through human movement. Yet, the unity concept implies that the human organism reacts to any stimulus as a whole. Therefore, the social and emotional are as much a part of the physical as are the psychology and the biology. While the human species is a biologic organism and in original nature has animal characteristics, they are engulfed in an environment and immersed in a specific culture. At birth children are like animals with pre-wired biologic drives and needs. Biologically they will grow and develop within certain limits set by factors contained in their

genes. Each is born with a unique genetic heritage including temperament. Their growth and development always occur in a setting characterized by culture, and this culture is characterized by people, ideas, and artifacts as parts of the social.

Personality, feelings, and attitudes are the results of people interacting with other people in their culture. Social behavior is a product of the interaction of original nature, culture and the environment. Social behavior and personality, while they are developed within the boundaries set by certain hereditary dispositions, are shaped and molded by the forces of the environment, particularly the cultural heritage already waiting to engulf them into its many facets. Young children are equipped with a set of forces, including inner drives, to fulfill primordial basic needs, but their social processes involve socialization and are dependent on the social and cultural heritage of their society.

Since expressive arts' enthusiasts and educators are concerned with the whole individual, the emerging generation should have knowledge of culture and social order and how the processes of socialization occur. This is experienced and achieved through cultural awareness and understanding, techniques and self-actualization (Davis, 1990). Creative or expressive arts have been long considered to be one of the aspects of education where personality can be influenced. They are rich in opportunities for the functioning of many social processes such as role playing, interaction, leadership, accommodation to resolve conflict, acceptance, appreciation, cooperation, increased freedom of expression, action and choice, fun and enjoyment, respect for authority, self-discipline, cultural understanding, catharsis and therapy, and enhance academic learning (Salmah Ayob, 1992).

Expressive arts have a close relationship with personality. Research shows that human personality can be influenced through a combination of play, creative dramatics, music, visual arts, literature, and educational movement. By the same token the type of activity one chooses to participate in is influenced greatly by one's unique personality. Socialization processes through play and expressive arts are one of education's best means of helping the individual child identify self-image, and formulate the ideal self. In a sense, this process of identification and discovery structure personality.

To understand expressive arts fully and to appreciate their claims as vital experiences in the lives of our people, we must first appreciate the relations which have existed between man and his works – between the mind and the manifold expressions. To recognize such relationship is to define and understand what is meant by aesthetics and creativity.

## CONCLUSION

The inclusion of creative and aesthetic development in the general education program is the one means of giving free opportunity to every child for experiencing the contributions it can make to his developing personality and his growing artistic nature. Involvement in the expressive arts prepares individuals for a world that wants artistic thinkers and creative problem solvers. In the real world of work, questions and problems seldom have but one answer, and the arts help prepare them to attend to multiple solutions, to take risks, and to capitalize on mistakes. Our ceremony depends on individuals who can imagine and produce products sought around the globe. The unique language, special symbol systems, and variety of technologies that individuals must master to become successful in the arts prepares them for a world which is always changing. Through the expressive arts (drama or theater, dance and music, and visual arts as well as literature experiences) individuals learn to cooperate and work as a team in ways critical to the success of corporations and family unity. Through the expressive arts individuals have chances to come to respect unusual points of view and learn that relationships matter, and they learn how important the form of ideas and feelings are to the content conveyed idea. Individuals who create and respond to the arts also have opportunities to make unique conceptual leaps by learning to focus on the whole, as well as the parts, to achieve understanding and respect.

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